

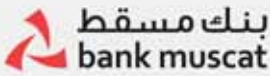


SOCOTRA CORMORANTS USE MUSANDAM AS FEEDING STATION

Musandam Governorate serves as one of the most prominent seasonal stations for the Socotra cormorant, locally called (Lawwah), a bird belonging to the threatened cormorants that are endemic to the Arabian Gulf, the south-eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula and Socotra Island in Yemen. Socotra cormorant often migrates to the west, as far as the Red Sea coast, and breeds in the Socotra Islands in the Indian Ocean. **>A2**



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STUDENTS' SAFETY IN FOCUS AS MINISTRY STRENGTHENS BUS SAFETY REGULATIONS

The Ministry of Education is committed to improving the safety of students by supplying state-of-the-art buses



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Stricter regulations governing buses will be in place once the schools reopen next week, the officials said.

In preparation for the new academic year 2024/2025, transportation of school students is the foremost priority of the Ministry of Education as it seeks to ensure

a comfortable and safe educational environment for them.

The Ministry has focused on basic procedures to improve the quality and efficiency of school transportation, including renewing contracts, providing new transportation that meets the safety standards, and implementing training programmes for drivers

and students on road safety.

Khamis Al-Hadidi, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Projects and Services, explained that the Ministry has formed committees from various educational directorates to examine current school transportation means, and has renewed contracts for more than 20,000 school buses



es, and provided (800) additional school transportation means to meet the growing needs and the opening of new school buildings, at a cost of OMR 4,800,000.

Al-Hadidi added: "To improve the school transportation service, address the challenges affecting the educational process for maximum satisfaction of students, the

Ministry of Education signed a contract with Karwa Cars Company and the Oman Development Bank to replace old school vehicles. "A total of 5,000 school transportation vehicles will be replaced within five years, with 1,000 vehicles to be replaced during the academic year 2024/2025," he added. **>A2**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Oman Air receives Boeing B787-9

1 Oman Air received delivery of its modern passenger aircraft Boeing B787-9, the first of three scheduled for this year. **>A3**

WORLD

22 dead in Pakistan bus accident

2 At least 22 people were killed and others were injured after a bus carrying Pakistani pilgrims from Iran crashed at Makran in Balochistan on Sunday. **>A6**

SPORTS

Historic 10-wicket win for Bangladesh

3 Bangladesh clinched a thrilling final day victory over Pakistan in the first Test of the two-match series in Rawalpindi on Sunday. **>B6**

PROVIDING INFORMATION

Muttrah Tourism Hub plays a stellar role in guiding tourists

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has taken several steps for the seamless travel experience of tourists.

For providing information and guiding visitors to the most prominent heritage sites and different destinations in the Sultanate of Oman, the Muttrah Tourism Hub (MTH) at Muttrah Waterfront in Muscat Governorate is playing a vital role in the tourism mission.

The MTH is prompt in answering the queries of tourists and providing them with necessary information about tourism companies and hotels. The centre showcases activities and events that serve the tourism, heritage and entertainment sectors and encourage visitors to explore them.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism said in a statement that more than 6,000 visitors availed the services of MTH since its opening on 1 January 2024 until mid-August 2024.

MTH responded to queries about tourist sites and services in Muscat Governorate, traditional markets, programmes of transportation and communication, food recommendations, trips, tours and cruises in Muscat city



and adjoining areas.

Hana Salim Al Bahrani, Head of the Heritage and Cultural Tourism Department, Supervisor of Muttrah Tourism Hub in the Wilayat of Muttrah, said that the centre also helps visitors by providing brochures, tourist maps and information related to museums, companies providing tourism services, hotels and promoting events and activities held in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman throughout the year.

She added that the centre also collects the comments and rec-

ommendations about ways to improve the services rendered to tourists.

Hana told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism recently completed the drafting of maps and designs related to the establishment of similar tourist guidance centres in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The plan, which is in the process of being endorsed by the government departments concerned, focuses on applying the best sustainable practices in the tourism sector.

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PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....	12:14pm
Asr.....	3:41pm
Maghrib.....	6:36pm
Isha.....	7:49pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:29am

5-DAY PROGRAMME

Training for workers of rehabilitation centres

MUSCAT: The training for the “Vocational Development Programme for the year 2024-2025 began on Sunday with the participation of a number of workers from various departments in the rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities affiliated to the Ministry of Social Development.

The 5-day programme aims to hone the skills of those working in the field of rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, develop their capabilities and performance, raise their efficiency and inform them of everything new in the field of rehabilitation to raise the quality of services. -ONA

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SEASONAL STATIONS

Socotra cormorants use Musandam Governorate as feeding station

KHASAB: Musandam Governorate serves as one of the most prominent seasonal stations for the Socotra cormorant, locally called (Lawwah), a bird belonging to the threatened cormorants that are endemic to the Arabian Gulf, the south-eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula and Socotra Island in Yemen.

Socotra cormorant often migrates to the west, as far as the Red Sea coast, and breeds in the Socotra Islands in the Indian Ocean.

Eng. Noora Abdullah Al Shehhi, Head of the Environment Conservation Section at Musandam Governorate’s Environment Department, said that Socotra cormorants inhabit the rocky areas and sandy beaches of Musandam from May to September every year.

During this period, the birds feed heavily on the abundant quantities of sardines that appear in the area, said Eng. Noora, noting that approximately 45,000 cormorants visited the area last year. Eng. Noora pointed that the species of birds (Socotra cormorants) was given that name due to the fact that it was registered for the first time on the island of Socotra in Yemen.

“Adult Socotra cormorants have black feathers, while the feathers



of juvenile birds are brown. Socotra cormorants are distinct for their slender neck and white belly. An adult bird grows to a length of 80 centimetres,” Eng. Noora explained.

She added that the Environment Authority (EA) is making efforts to follow up the activities of different types of migratory birds. The EA conducts field surveys and studies and monitors any human infringements on the species, said Eng. Noora, noting that Socotra cormorants face many challenges, including marine pollution, the development of coastal areas and fishing. -ONA

INSPIRATION AND EMPOWERMENT

GCC Guides Camp begins in Salalah

SALALAH: The activities of the 14th Guides Camp of GCC higher education scouts kicked off yesterday at Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.

The camp, held till 30 August 2024, is themed “Inspiration and Empowerment”. It is hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in the Governorate of Dhofar. The open-

ing ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Hilal Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health.

20 Gulf universities

As many as 250 guides from 20 Gulf universities are taking part in the camp.

Activities of the camp include courses, workshops, lectures and discussion panels, as well as various sports and cultural activities. -ONA



Recall

Recall Date: 26/08/2024

Porsche Taycan

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
Porsche Taycan	2020 - 2024	61 Cars

Recall Consequence

Brake hoses were installed on the left and right front axle of the affected vehicles which were designed with an insufficient bending radius.

Recall Action

The brake hose on the left and right of the front axle must therefore be replaced.

To check the Serial Numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>

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Consumer Protection Authority
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DHOFAR MUNICIPALITY

Mobile food lab carries out inspection in Dhofar

SALALAH: The mobile food laboratory of Dhofar Municipality carries out food inspection and analysis services at various locations of the Dhofar Khareef Season 2024.

It’s the part of the municipality’s efforts to improve health practices and achieve the highest standards to ensure safe and healthy food.

The Director of the Food and Laboratories Department at Dhofar Municipality, said that the mobile food laboratory in the Khareef season 2024 aims to raise health control measures of the temporary mobile carts.

SAFETY OF STUDENTS

Training of bus drivers

<FROM A1 The Director-General said that the Ministry has set security and safety requirements for the new means of student transportation.

There are automatic guidance boards at the back and around the bus to indicate when it has stopped while students are getting on and off, as well as providing air conditioning units, a first aid box, and automatic tracking, sensing and monitoring devices with high specifications and technologies, with the provision of a fire extinguisher in accordance with the traffic safety regulations in force according to the requirements of the Royal Oman Police.

Drivers of these buses will be gradually trained in preventive driving courses in coordination with one of the specialised training institutes.

Khamis Al-Hadidi also pointed out that the Ministry continues to train school bus drivers within the preventive driving programme in cooperation with the Traffic Safety Institute and the Oman Oil Development Company to make them aware of the latest driving and safety practices, which contributes to creating a safe and reliable transportation environment.

In the past academic year, the Ministry trained 400 drivers at the level of educational directorates in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, and the training included presenting a set of topics and activities that aim to improve their skills and competencies to enhance safety and security on the road.

On the other hand, the Ministry continues during the new academic year to implement the (VIA) programme project in cooperation with (Shell Oman), which was conducted in four schools during the academic year 2023/2022 and will be implemented in 33 schools in various governorates of the Sultanate and will target approximately 1,320 students.

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Oman Air receives new Boeing 787-9

The newest aircraft features a two-class configuration with 30 Business Class seats and 258 Economy Class seats

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Air received delivery of its latest Boeing B787-9 aircraft, the first of three scheduled for this year. Part of an existing order, which includes eight more aircraft by 2027, the newest marks the tenth Dreamliner in the airline's fleet. As one of the world's most modern and advanced passenger aircraft, the B787-9 is known for its innovative design and exceptional fuel efficiency, while its wide cabins and large windows offer unparalleled on-board comfort for guests. The aircraft touched down in



Muscat on Friday afternoon, arriving from the Boeing facility in Seattle. "We're excited to welcome our new Boeing B787-9 to our aircraft line-up, which aligns with our strategy to fly a modern and common Oman Air fleet. It allows us to maintain efficiency in operations, optimise maintenance costs and ensure a seamless and consistent experience for our guests," said Con Korfiatis, Chief Executive Officer. **Financial sustainability** "Our latest addition to the fleet is also consistent with our focus on transforming our airline towards financial sustainability, while

upholding our reputation as a world-class carrier and supporting Oman's ambitions to increase tourism and connectivity in the years to come." The newest aircraft features a two-class configuration with 30 Business Class seats and 258 Economy Class seats and will serve across the airline's network of destinations. Oman Air's spacious, elegant cabin design, and exceptional service and hospitality, has garnered it a string of international awards, including most recently Best Seat Comfort in the Middle East at the APEX 2024 Awards and Best Airline Staff Middle East at the Skytrax 2024 Awards.

CROWNE PLAZA

Masin and Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre to host high-profile panel discussions on arbitration and construction dispute management in Muscat

MUSCAT: MASIN, an internationally renowned consultancy firm specialising in engineering and construction disputes and arbitrations, in collaboration with Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre, is organising an exclusive event in Muscat focusing on Arbitrations in Construction Contracts and Dispute Management. This event will take place on 28 August 2024 at the Crowne Plaza, Qurum Heights, Muscat, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM GST. The event will feature two highly anticipated panel discussions, bringing together leading experts and practitioners in the field.

The first panel discussion, titled "Arbitration and Settlement under Omani Law," will provide insights into the legal frameworks and best practices for arbitration in Oman. Distinguished speakers include Dr. Moosa Al Azri, an International Arbitrator; Yasser Taqi, Partner at Dentons; Raya Al Harthy, Partner at Trowers & Hamlin; Jyothi Mani, Registrar at the Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre; and Dhananjay Sadavarte, a representative from MASIN, who will serve as the moderator.

The second panel discussion, "Navigating the Burden of Proof: A Spotlight on Construction Contract and Dispute Management," will delve into the complexities of managing disputes in construction contracts, focusing on the burden of proof. This session will be moderated by Pallavi S Chavan of MASIN and will include insights from Dr. Shehab Farouk, Legal Director at CMS Oman; Gerard Moore, Partner at Mayer Brown; Amir Mahdavi, Senior Associate at Curtis, Mallet-Prevost, Colt & Mosle LLP; and Mayank Singh Thakur, Senior Partner at MASIN.

This event is an unparalleled opportunity for professionals in the legal, engineering, and construction sectors to gain valuable knowledge, network with industry leaders, and engage in meaningful discussions on current and future trends. Prior registration confirma-

Arbitration and Settlement under Omani Law
Panel Discussion- 1

Navigating the Burden of Proof: A Spotlight on Construction Contract and Dispute Management
Panel Discussion- 2

The first panel discussion, titled "Arbitration and Settlement under Omani Law," will provide insights into the legal frameworks and best practices for arbitration in Oman. The second panel discussion, "Navigating the Burden of Proof: A Spotlight on Construction Contract and Dispute Management," will delve into the complexities of managing disputes in construction contracts, focusing on the burden of proof.

tion is mandatory, to register please email marketing@masinproject.com, bdoman@masinproject.com or dhananjay.s@masinproject.com

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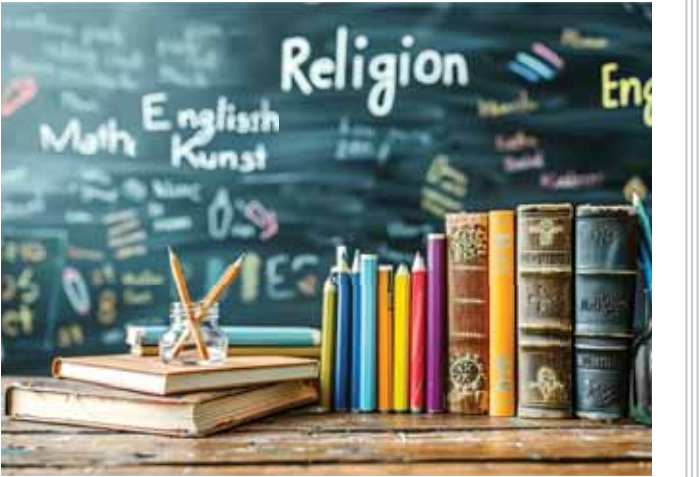
COMMENTARY

Should patriotism be introduced in our school curriculum?



SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

Patriotism is the love of your homeland and perhaps it needs to be instilled in young people as early as possible to make sure they grow up to be law abiding citizens. So the question we should ask ourselves whether there is a strong need to include a subject of patriotism in the school curriculum. Personally, I think young people need to develop a bond with their country as early as possible. It must be built in them for them to have a national pride in the society they live in. Not just it is important for them to understand law and order but maintain a life-long discipline to serve their country well. But the question is how it should be taught in schools? It should feel like part of the class and conducted by teachers naturally. Peace and respect are the vital subjects to be taught. Why? Because these two elements, so it seems to me, lack in some children these days, who grow up to be wild. Gone are the days when school children are disciplined by smacking and caning. The laws protect them from "bullying" teachers who were taking advantage of their



authority over the children they used to teach. While I agree that teachers should never beat up students but that should have been replaced with something more effective to discipline children who are behaving badly. So the patriotism classes would need a carefully prepared syllabus designed to make students enjoy taking instructions. First, teachers would need to be prepared before they start teaching this important subject. I would not be exaggerating if I say some teachers, themselves need to understand patriotism to effectively teach the subjects they would be teaching. It would not serve well to have a teacher, who is going to be a role model for his students, a law breaker in his spare time. It would not be easy but somewhere it needs to start to get teachers well prepared to do it. To really appreciate about patriotism, just read the news on international affairs and you would understand its impact. But again it is not just about law abiding only. It is also about preparing young minds for the

future responsibilities and the roles they would take when they are ready for it. Patriotism is also about teaching students about patience and taking responsibility of their actions. Young students would also need to understand that the role of considering others is of paramount importance. Teachers would need to impress on their students about loyalty and support for their country and the respect of their fellow citizens at all the time. You would say parents would also need to take the responsibility, too. It all starts at home and fine-tuned in the classroom. Parents who are behaving badly at home also need to admit that it does not help to raise a successful child that way. So parents too, need to help out on patriotism of their children within the four wall of their homes. In Oman, we are fortunate to have deep roots of cultural and heritage harmony that goes back for many centuries. In conclusion, patriotism is a wonderful journey towards adulthood if it is well prepared both at home and schools.

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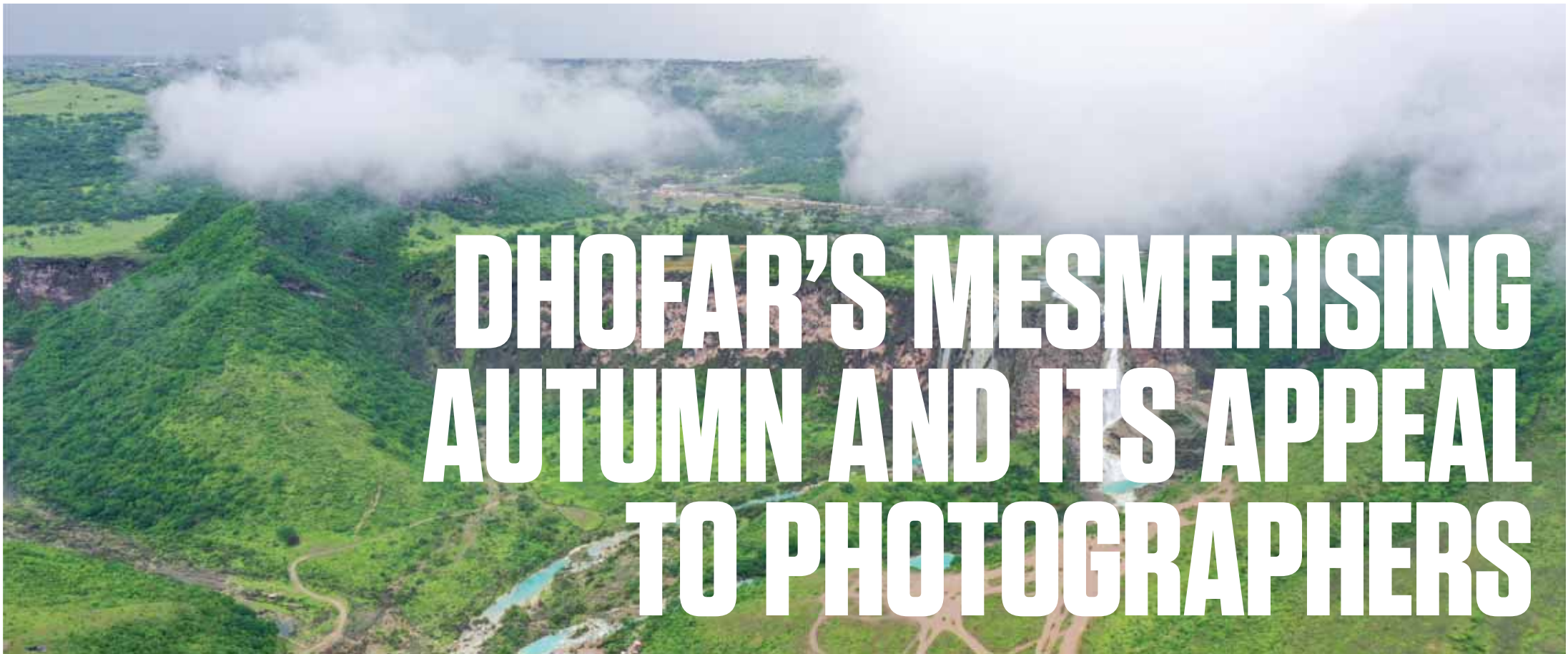
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OMAN



MUSCAT: The Dhofar Governorate, radiant in its lush autumnal garb, stands in majesty and splendour before the lenses of photographers, professionals, amateurs and creatives who visit the governorate in this season from the Sultanate of Oman and from outside it. They strive with a delicate sense and tireless perseverance to keep their camera lenses in a state of constant alert to capture the most beautiful and perfect image in each of their trips and document it in the photographic memory of their most important creative works. The autumn season allows them to achieve this dream.

Photographer Saeed bin Muslim Al Marhoon is one such photographer who loves Omani nature and strives each year to highlight the beauty of places and the diversity of breathtaking views in the season. He says: "For me, the Dhofar autumn season is an ideal time to take pictures and provides me with multiple options. The extended green carpet, the creeping fog over the mountain peaks and the intermingling of cheerful colors of the wonderful scenes make the pictures in this season very special."

Al Marhoun explains: "The harmony and attractiveness of colors have provided me with unique opportunities to develop my photographic skills over the past years. Every photographic adventure adds a new touch to my photographic collections, and increases my knowledge, understanding and respect for nature."

Adnan Bashir Bait Dahish believes that the autumn season offers multiple photography topics that attract professional and amateur photographers and those interested in nature from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman due to the diversity of natural scenes of mountains, waterfalls, springs flowing from the mountains and green plains.

Ayad bin Mohammed Al Yafei said: "The autumn season is a unique opportunity to record and document the beauty of nature, as well as to document aspects of Omani customs that accompany the season and preserve them for generations."

Al Yafei added: "In recent years, aerial photography via drones has provided the ability to capture high-resolution images and video clips thanks to the advanced cameras installed on them and the variety of aircraft used in photography, which allows photographers to capture images and video clips of natural sites that were difficult

to reach."

Abdullah bin Ahmed Al Maashani said: "The Khareef season in Dhofar Governorate is an ideal opportunity for photographers and one of the most magical and beautiful seasons. For me as a photographer, this season represents an unparalleled opportunity to capture panoramic images that captivate hearts."

Al Maashani revealed to us the most important natural sites that he is keen to visit and take pictures in, saying: "Wadi Darbat, the summit of Jabal Samhan, Ain Jarziz, the Iftalqut area and the view of Jabal Shaat are among the places that I love to visit and photograph. These sites are characterized by diverse terrain that allows the photographer to take wide panoramic images, in addition to waterfalls flowing from the mountains and extended green spaces, which provide wonderful backgrounds for photos that require the photographer to be ready to capture the right moment at any time. The photographer can take advantage of the right time to create amazing effects in the photos."

Hanan Adel Yaqoub from Kuwait says: "Dhofar Governorate and the autumn season are one of the most wonderful natural destinations that attract photography and nature lovers from all over the world, and for more than seven years now. I am keen to visit Dhofar Governorate during this season, not only as a photographer who loves nature, but also as someone who seeks psychological comfort, tranquility, and mental clarity, as this region combines heritage, authenticity, nature, and family atmosphere, making it an ideal destination for those looking to relax and enjoy the beauty of nature."

Multiple opinions and diverse experiences reflected different shooting angles for a group of photographers and nature enthusiasts, but they all agreed on the features of beauty and uniqueness that have been collected for this dear spot of the precious land of Oman.

Here and in every corner of Oman, the sun rises or sets, and in every natural scene, historical witness or civilized achievement, there are stories waiting to be told through the lens of an artist photographer who knows how to read the moment and document it as befits the majesty of time and the splendor of place.

-ONA



Teachers, admin and support staff return to various schools in Oman

The number of teachers this year in government schools reached 61,195 with an Omanisation rate of 87.6 percent, distributed over 1,269 schools

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The return to school for the new academic year 2024/2025 began on Sunday, with supervisors, members of educational bodies, related jobs, and supporting groups starting their work in various schools in the Sultanate of Oman in preparation for ringing school bells to welcome students next Sunday (1 September, 2024).

The number of teachers this year in government schools reached 61,195 with an Omanisation rate of 87.6 percent, distributed over 1,269 schools.

The number of administrators and technicians in government schools reached 10,652, of whom 4,306 were males and 6,346 were females with an Omanisation rate of 99.8 percent.

As for the number of teachers in special education schools, it reached 220 teachers with an Omanisation rate of 93 percent, and the total number of administrators in special education schools is 52 with an Omanisation rate of 83 percent.

During the past period, the Ministry of Education completed the procedures for appointing teachers who passed the written tests and personal interviews for this academic year, including 691 male teachers, representing 21.3 percent and 2,542 female teachers, representing 78.7 percent of the total number of those appointed; to meet the actual need for teaching staff in various specialisations.

Saif Al Julandani, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision, said: "Teachers are the cornerstone of the education-



al process, as they play a pivotal role in educational work; by providing their students with knowledge and various skills, and providing them with life experiences inside and outside the classroom; to refine their personalities, and prepare them in the best way for life and work. Thus, teachers receive increasing attention in various educational systems due to the human value they represent in contemporary societies."

He added: "In this context, the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision targeted all new teachers who joined the educational work in the academic year 2024/2025 in various specialisations, and focused on supporting new teachers and assisting them in performing their duties, and introducing them to their roles according to the systems and regulations governing the work, and the ethics of the teaching profession, including the concepts, principles, and foundations that frame the teaching profession, and the most important characteristics that must be available in teachers, their rights and duties, and planning for daily and semester teaching."

"The new teachers programme also includes the concepts of planning for the teaching process, its types, and its importance, with the presentation of applied models for the types of planning, introducing new teachers to the electronic preparation platform (Classera) and how to employ it, employing assessment tools to measure student learning, defining the concepts of measurement and assessment and its types, and the mechanisms for employing these tools in the teaching and learning processes, explaining the con-



cepts of supervisory visits and their objectives.

"It also includes psychological containment in the classroom environment, procedures for containing learners psychologically, and procedures for applying it in classroom situations, defining the curricula in the Sultanate of Oman, how to employ the curriculum study plan, employing modern platforms and technologies in education, the role of technology in improving the quality of education, and its positives for the teacher and the student, as well as practical applications in activating the Ministry's platform (Classera) when activating distance learning in the schools of the Sultanate of Oman."

Khamis Al-Hadidi, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Projects and Services, spoke about the Directorate's preparations for the new academic year 2024/2025, saying: "Sixteen school buildings have been received to be operated at the beginning of the new academic year. Construction of 15 school buildings has also begun, in addition to starting to tender for 20 new school

buildings. The Ministry has been keen to provide the operational requirements for the educational process according to the latest technical and scientific specifications to ensure the provision of a suitable atmosphere for the school environment; as it is one of the most important aspects supporting the teaching and learning processes, such as the educational additions project."

"During the fiscal year 2024, the actual cost of additions was committed to 25 schools, in addition to implementing additions in 50 schools, and the renovation project for the Directorate-General of Education to renovate a number of its schools during the fiscal year 2024, and to prepare and refurbish 83 science laboratories in schools, as the preparation and refurbishing of 60 science laboratories has been completed, and an amount has been allocated to improve the educational environment by establishing and preparing sports fields, canopies, and cafeterias."

He added: "An annual amount has been approved to provide 800 new school transportation vehicles, re-new contracts for more than 20,000



school transportation vehicles, and sign an agreement between Karwa Motors Company and the Oman Development Bank to replace old school transportation vehicles under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Finance."

"Nearly 5,000 means of transportation for students will be replaced for a period of five years, provided that 1,000 school transportation vehicles are replaced every year starting from 2024/2025, distributed across the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman according to actual need."

"A number of 24,000 air conditioning units were supplied and installed in the second phase, and the work is assigned to companies to supply and install 44,000 devices for the third and fourth phases."

Abdullah Al Fouri, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Education in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, said: "Preparations for the new academic year began early, as the Directorate was keen to implement its administrative and technical plans."

"An administrative decision was formed to determine the needs of schools to prepare for the academic year, and to form executive and technical committees to determine the readiness of schools, the extent of completion of maintenance work, and to prepare the first batch of school books, furniture, and educational tools, and to receive them according to the distribution plan, and to the formations received from the Planning and Development Department, with emphasis on all schools receiving their share before the start of the new academic year."

The Director-General said: "The distribution of new senior teachers to schools has been completed according to need, the training programmes provided to new teachers have been followed up, a plan for professional development programmes for supervisors has been prepared, a programme for preparing new delegates to the position of assistant school principal has been prepared, and the vocational guidance specialist has been distributed to schools according to need, and proposals have been made to fill vacancies in the schools."

Regarding new educational projects and additions, the Director-General said that the Projects and Services Department has received all new educational projects since the beginning of this year in addition to receiving new additions, as the project to add 8 classrooms and a bathroom to Bilad Bani Bu Ali School has been received, and the project to add 7 classrooms, an improved physics lab, a teachers' room, and two bathrooms to Al-Aija School has been received."

"Additional projects are being implemented in Al-Imam Al-Salt Bin Al-Qasim School with 8 classrooms, and Al-Janani School with 4 classrooms and a teachers' room. The procedures for assigning 7 addition projects in a number of schools are being completed, namely: Munir Bin Al-Nir, Laali Al-Ilm, Al-Suwaih, Al-Asalah, Al-Tasneem, Al-Jawabi, and Sur for basic education. Projects are currently being implemented to prepare and furnish 18 laboratories in the governorate's schools as well."

Full story @ timesofoman.com/oman

VIDEO GAME DISORDER

Health Council unveils campaign

RIYADH: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Health Council has launched a campaign to raise awareness about video game disorder, titled "Play.But", as part of its efforts to promote health awareness and to use video games in a healthy and balanced manner.

The aim is to provide guidance and advice to players and their families on how to enjoy video games in a healthy and moderate

manner. The campaign includes publishing a set of awareness messages that focus on the importance of balancing playing electronic games with other daily activities, while emphasising the psychological, physical and social benefits that can be achieved through this balance.

The messages also provide guidance on the optimal use of electronic games and determin-

ing the appropriate period for playing them. Gaming disorder has been defined as a pattern of persistent gaming behaviour, where a person has difficulty controlling the amount of time spent gaming, leading to gaming being preferred over other tasks in their life. In 2018, the WHO classified gaming disorder in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). — OMA

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Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصة Tender Notice

THE INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE AT THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INVITES FOR THE FOLLOWING TENDERS:

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MT CIT 198/2024	EXPANSION OF THE MINISTRY'S HEAD QUARTER BUILDING	22-08-2024	05-09-2024	03-10-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELLENT & FIRST)	(100/-) ONE HANDED OMANI RIAL FOR LOCAL COMPANIES (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL (FOR SME) NON-REFUNDABLE

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INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE

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EU ‘extremely concerned’ over Venezuela election



The government-controlled National Electoral Council (CNE) declared incumbent Nicolas Maduro the winner of the July 28 election, but has refused to publish detailed results



but has refused to publish detailed results. According to CNE figures, Maduro reportedly received 51.2% of the vote, while the joint opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia received 44.2%. Gonzalez Urrutia's team claims he won with 67%, backed up by 83% of voting machine tallies that they claim they have in their possession. They have rejected the CNE results, saying the organization is an arm of Maduro's ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). A government crackdown on protests in the wake of the vote has led to at least 2,400 arrests and 23 deaths. In a statement issued on behalf of the EU on Sunday, Borrell urged

the CNE to “publish and independently verify” the voting records or “actas” of all polling stations. EU does not recognise Maduro's win Venezuela's top court on Thursday certified Maduro's win. But the court is widely regarded as another institution loyal to Maduro. Borrell said Caracas has still not provided the “necessary evidence to assess the electoral process.” “Only complete and independently verifiable results will be accepted and recognised,” he added. “The reviewed ‘actas’ published by the opposition exhibit the security features of the original result protocols, thereby confirming their reliability,” Borrell said, adding that Gonzalez Urrutia “would

appear to be the winner of the presidential election by a significant majority.” Borrell also called for Venezuelan authorities to “refrain from using excessive force, end the repression and harassment of the opposition and civil society, and release all political prisoners.” “Venezuelan authorities must respect the right of all Venezuelans to peacefully demonstrate and freely express their political opinions without fear of reprisal,” he added. Maduro government summons Gonzalez Urrutia A UN report last week said at least 1,260 people in Venezuela have been detained and 23 killed since the election amid “fierce repression by the state.” Maduro confirmed earlier this month that some 2,000 people had been arrested and would face punishment. Gonzalez Urrutia, who has not been seen publicly since the end of July, is believed to be in hiding. Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado subsequently led the wave of protests, but she too has since gone into hiding.

— DW

MAKRAN IN BALOCHISTAN

At least 22 dead in Pakistan bus accident

ISLAMABAD: At least 22 people were killed and others injured after a bus carrying Pakistani pilgrims from Iran crashed at Makran in Balochistan on Sunday, according to Pakistan-based media report. The bus was en route to Pakistan's Punjab from Iran. The injured and the dead were rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital in Othal. At least 22 people were killed and others reported injured, as per ARY News. Further details of the accident

are awaited, ARY News stated, fearing rise in the death toll. Earlier on January 17, At least two people were killed and 25 others were injured after a passenger bus overturned in Hub City, Balochistan, according to ARY News. According to reports, the incident occurred in Bella, Hub, when a passenger bus toppled, killing two people on the spot and injuring over a dozen others. The bus was on its way to Karachi from Quetta when the incident happened, according to ARY News.

According to ARY News, the rescue personnel arrived at the scene after being notified and transported the deceased and injured to a nearby medical facility. Road accidents have been recorded across Pakistan as a result of severe fog during the winter. On January 16, two individuals lost their lives after two cars collided as a result of severe fog near Ghamandpur village, Bahawalnagar, ARY News reported. Meanwhile, rescue workers transported the injured to a neighbouring hos-

pital, where they were treated before being moved to the headquarters hospital. At least three people were killed in a collision between a bus and a rickshaw near Hub Chowki in Pakistan's Karachi on November 13 last year. The accident took place near Hub Chowki when an overspeeding bus collided with a rickshaw and motorcycle. Three people, including a woman and a girl, died in the accident.

— ANI

NASA



US astronauts Wilmore and Sunita to remain in space till February 2025

WASHINGTON DC: National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has said it's “too risky” to bring the two astronauts, Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams, back to earth currently, because of which Boeing's Starliner capsule will return without the two astronauts. Wilmore and Williams will continue their work formally as part of the expedition and will return only in February 25. This means what would have been a week-long test flight will now extend to around 8 months. “Wilmore and Williams will continue their work formally as part of the Expedition 71/72 crew through February 2025. They will fly home aboard a Dragon spacecraft with two other crew members assigned to the agency's SpaceX Crew-9 mission. Starliner is expected to depart from the space station and make a safe, controlled autonomous re-entry and landing in early September,” NASA said in a statement. The uncrewed return of capsule will allow NASA and Boeing to continue gathering testing data on the Starliner during its upcoming flight home, while also not accepting more risk than necessary for its crew. Wilmore and Williams, who flew to the International Space Station in June aboard NASA's Boeing Crew Flight Test, have been supporting station research, maintenance, and Starliner system testing and data analysis, among other activities.

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said the spaceflight is “risky” and the decision to keep the two astronauts in space and bring the Starliner uncrewed is because of “commitment to safety.” “Spaceflight is risky, even at its safest and most routine. A test flight, by nature, is neither safe, nor routine. The decision to keep Butch and Sunita aboard the International Space Station and bring Boeing's Starliner home uncrewed is the result of our commitment to safety: our core value and our North Star,” Nelson said. “I'm grateful to both the NASA and Boeing teams for all their incredible and detailed work.” Notably, NASA and Boeing identified helium leaks and experienced issues with the spacecraft reaction control thrusters on June 6 as Starliner approached the space station, the agency stated. Since then, engineering teams have completed a significant amount of work, including reviewing a collection of data, conducting flight and ground testing, hosting independent reviews with agency propulsion experts, and developing various return contingency plans. The uncertainty and lack of expert concurrence do not meet the agency's safety and performance requirements for human spaceflight, thus prompting NASA leadership to move the astronauts to the Crew-9 mission.

— ANI

FORUM FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

36 Ugandan opposition members from FDC face ‘terrorism’ charges

KAMPALA: Thirty-six members of Uganda's opposition party Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), who were charged with terrorism-related offenses last month, are scheduled to appear in court on Monday. The group had travelled to the Kenyan city of Kisumu for a training course, according to their lawyers, but were deported back to neighbouring Uganda where authorities charged them with terrorism-related offenses. The Uganda Police Force in a statement accused the suspects of being “engaged in covert activities that are suspected to be subversive, drawing the attention of Kenyan security forces.” The group denied any wrongdoing, their legal representatives said. Lawyer Erias Lukwago criticized the actions of the Ugandan authorities. “This is an absurd abuse of a judicial process to witch-hunt and torment opposition supporters,” he said, claiming that the FDC members had travelled to Kisumu to attend a training seminar. The court charge sheet accused the 36 people of traveling to Kenya “to provide or receive terrorist training.” They are now being held at a prison about 50 kilometres (31 miles) northwest of the capital.

Allegations of torture “The only purpose of this charge is to make it difficult for the accused to apply for bail so that they're locked away for months. The charge is just an extension of the physical torture they've endured so far,” Lukwago said, referring to allegations of torture and injuries encountered by the group. Wanjeri Nderu, president of the International Society For Human Rights (ISHR), criticized the arrest of= the group on Kenyan soil, highlighting that Kenya doesn't have an extradition treaty with Uganda. “There was no due process followed or court process where they were maybe arrested doing something, taken through a court process, and then extradited as



a request from Uganda to Kenya for them to go and face charges at home. This is what impunity looks like,” Nderu told DW. Critics accuse Museveni of crushing dissent Opposition critics and human rights campaigners have long accused Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's government of using fabricated charges to clamp down on his opponents — charges that government officials deny. Under Museveni, who has ruled the country for 38 years, Uganda has descended into a repressive state with a long history of intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrests, detention and torture of those who are critical of the government. Ugandan opposition leader, former popstar Bobi Wine, in 2021 requested the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate rights abuses in Uganda. Adolf Mbaine, a political analyst at Makerere University, told DW that Museveni's government

doesn't treat the opposition fairly, however legitimate the grouping may be. “The relationship between President Museveni and the political opposition has been fractured over many years. The president doesn't like strong opposition and threats to his hold onto power. And therefore, people involved in the opposition have been mistreated.” During the last presidential election in 2021 — which the opposition claimed was marred by fraud demonstrations against the arrest of Bobi Wine were violently repressed by the security forces, leaving at least 54 people dead. Uganda has been ruled by Museveni with an iron fist since 1986. Why Kenya is not considered safe for dissidents Nderu criticised Kenya's track record on protecting foreigners who are seeking refuge or fleeing political persecution. “We have a situation where our police system colludes with foreign police systems or militaries to

access individuals who are deemed to be threats in their mother countries. So what happened to the 36 Ugandans was very unfortunate,” the ISHR president told DW. “I do not advice even human rights defenders from neighboring countries to come and hide here because being accessed by the people they were running away from is a huge possibility.” Adolf Mbaine, a political analyst at Makerere University, suggested that the close relationship between Kenyan President William Ruto and his Ugandan counterpart, Yoweri Museveni, was likely a factor in the opposition group's deportation. “If it is true that Ugandan security operatives were involved, then there may have been approval at the level of the presidency for Ugandan security operatives to get involved,” Mbaine told DW. “Because if this was not the case, then the Kenyan government would probably be forthright demanding answers about how this happened.” — DW

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BANGLADESH FLOODS

Electricity partially restored in Feni city

DHAKA: Electricity was partially restored at Feni in Bangladesh after the flood water significantly receded, according to media report. Mobile network and internet woes still continue with spotty network in the area as of Friday, the Bangladeshi daily reported. Residents said that water has fully drained from Mohipal Road and power is available in parts of Feni city, including the DC Office and its surrounding areas. Although trucks with supplies and rescue equipment are entering the city, the rural areas of the district still await fresh water and dry rations. A resident of Feni city, Mohammad Riazul Hasan, told the Dhaka Tribune, “The water level in the municipality area is significantly lower. But I heard that other areas are still inundated.” Riazul said the canals were overflowing in the downstream area in Sonagazi. Rescue volunteers suffered from foot fungus due to prolonged exposure to water. Dhaka Tribune quoted Abdulah Al Mamun, a volunteer in Feni, as saying, “We have tried to reach Sonagazi on Friday. But we failed as we do not have speedboats.” Mamun said that load shedding and spotty mobile network



caused difficulty in communication, which hampered the rescue process. Mamun also said the water level in other parts went down by 5-6 inches. Bangladesh Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus on Saturday urged all parties to cooperate in addressing health and food risks once floodwaters recede, the Dhaka Tribune stated. On August 22, Chittagong floods worsened after nine upazillas submerged, and 45,916 families, which had 2,48,050 individuals, were facing severe distress, the Dhaka Tribune reported. Chittagong District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Saifulah Majumder said that 800 tons of rice have been allocated for disaster relief, with 200 tons distributed across the affected areas.

— ANI

Thousands of children in Gaza facing severe malnutrition: WHO

WHO pointed out that among these children, 3,288 are suffering from acute malnutrition. This figure comes after the examination of around 240,000 children since the beginning of this year

GAZA: The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that thousands of children in Gaza are at risk of severe malnutrition, with approximately 15,000 children in the war-torn region suffering from malnutrition.

In a press statement, WHO pointed out that among these



children, 3,288 are suffering from acute malnutrition. This figure comes after the examination of around 240,000 children in the region since the beginning of this year.WHO is currently supporting four facilities dedicated to treating malnutrition in the enclave,

including a center at the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya, northern Gaza.

A medical source from Kamal Adwan Hospital stated that nearly 5,000 children have been recorded with symptoms of malnutrition. Of these, one-third exhibit signs

of severe malnutrition. Alarmingly, 25% of these cases have not received intensive treatment due to the severity of their condition, which includes complications.

The source added, “The influx of cases with complications indicates that this is a critical stage

– potentially a prelude to death if immediate intervention is not provided.”

Construction costs in the West Bank rise by 0.31% in July

The cost of construction for residential buildings in the West Bank saw a modest increase of 0.31% in July compared to June, with the construction price index rising to 121.93 from 121.55 the previous month, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). In its statement issued on Sunday , the PCBS reported that, across major categories, prices for raw materials and primary goods increased by 0.47%, while the cost of renting equipment rose by 0.20%. In contrast, the costs for labor remained stable in July 2024 compared to the previous month.

The index for construction costs for non-residential buildings also saw a similar rise of 0.31% in July, reaching 120.87 compared to 120.49 in June. This increase was attributed to a 0.46% rise in the cost of raw materials and a 0.12% rise in equipment rental costs, with labour costs remaining unchanged.Additionally, the cost of constructing skeleton buildings in the West Bank increased by 0.43%

in July, with the index rising to 121.83 from 121.30 in June.

The main contributors to this rise were a 0.65% increase in raw material prices and a 0.19% increase in equipment rental costs, while labour costs remained steady.

Joint coordination to strengthen relief efforts in Gaza discussed

Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa and United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, discussed the latest developments and the joint coordination to strengthen the relief efforts in the Gaza Strip.During a meeting today in Ramallah, they discussed the efforts to stop the genocidal war waged against the Palestinian people in the Strip, and the aggression of the occupation army and the colonists against Palestinians in the West Bank. They also tackled the interventions of the Gaza-based relief government, plans to expand emergency relief operations once the aggression on the Strip stops, restoration of basic services, the reintegration and consolidation of national institutions and the comprehensive reconstruction programme. – Wafa

FRENCH AIRPORT

Telegram founder Pavel Durov arrested

PARIS: The founder of the Telegram messaging app, Pavel Durov, who had an arrest warrant issued against him, was detained by the French authorities at an airport outside Paris, according to media report.

Officers from France’s anti-fraud office, attached to French customs, took the French-Russian billionaire into custody on Saturday evening after he arrived at Bourget Airport on a flight from Azerbaijan, according to CNN affiliate BFMTV.

Durov, 39, was wanted under a French arrest warrant due to the lack of moderation on Telegram, which allegedly led to the platform being used for money laundering, drug trafficking and sharing pedophilic content.

According to BFMTV, the Telegram founder had not regularly travelled to France and Europe since the arrest warrant was issued.

Notably, France issued an arrest warrant for Durov on charges

of complicity in drug trafficking, crimes against children and fraud due to the lack of moderation on Telegram and his failure to cooperate with law enforcement, the Moscow Times reported, citing French local media.

The Russian-born founder of Telegram, which he says boasts over 900 million users, is currently based in Dubai. He became a naturalised French citizen in August 2021.

Durov, who is also the founder of the VKontakte social network, left Russia in 2014 after he refused to share VKontakte users’ data with Russian security services. Later, Russia unsuccessfully attempted to block Telegram over its refusal to provide users’ online communications to security services.

Telegram is widely used by Russian speakers. It has become a key platform for sharing information about the war in Ukraine and is reportedly used by the Russian military to communicate.

– ANI

SEVEN PEOPLE KILLED

Italian authorities open manslaughter probe into deadly superyacht sinking

SICILY: Italian investigators are probing the sinking of the 56-metre-long (184-foot), UK-flagged superyacht Bayesian, the head of the public prosecutor’s office in Palermo’s Termini Imerese, Ambrogio Cartosio, announced on Saturday.

Cartosio said the investigation was not aimed at any individual but that it was “plausible” that multiple crimes may have been committed relating to manslaughter and negligence in the pre-dawn sinking that killed seven people including: UK tech entrepreneur Mike Lynch, his 18-year-old daughter Hannah, Morgan Stanley banker Jonathan Bloomer and his wife, lawyer Chris Morvillo and his wife, and the ship’s onboard cook.

Though outside observers say the boat likely sank as the result of a weather anomaly such as a waterspout or a downburst, Cartosio suggested it could also have been the result of “behavior that was



not aligned with the responsibilities that everyone needs to take while boating.”

Giovanni Costantino, CEO of the Italian Sea Group – the company that owns the yacht’s manufacturer, Perini – ruled out design and construction issues as the reason for the unexpectedly quick capsizing and sinking of the vessel, pointing instead to a string of “indescribable, unreasonable er-

rors” committed by the Bayesian’s crew.

Ship’s captain questioned

Prosecutors have said that James Cutfield, the ship’s captain, has been questioned alongside other survivors and has been “extremely cooperative.”

A total of 15 people survived the sinking, having escaped in a lifeboat.

The body of the ship’s cook was found near the wreck on Monday, and six more bodies were recovered from the boat’s wreckage on Wednesday and Thursday.

Investigators and salvagers are now working to retrieve the vessel itself, which is lying on the seabed off Sicily at a depth of about 50 metres (164 feet)

Most of the crew managed to escape. It has been speculated that those who did not survive the sinking had been asleep when the vessel went down. Questions have now arisen the crew’s effort to alert them and give them time to evacuate.

Investigators said that all of the bodies eventually recovered were found in one single cabin on the port side of the vessel. The room did not belong to any of those inside. Prosecutors say those involved in the incident are free to leave Italy but are requested to remain available for further questioning. – DW

ON-GOING DISPUTE

Morocco’s strategy on the Western Sahara has paid off

RABAT: For Morocco’s King Mohammed VI, this summer could go down in history. For five decades, the Western Sahara, a territory to the south of the country, has been at the centre of a conflict which might now end.

The phosphate-rich region with direct access to the Atlantic Ocean is home to the around 160,000 local Sahrawi people who have been seeking autonomy ever since Spain withdrew from the area in 1975.

The Sahrawis are represented by the Polisario Front, which is backed by neighbouring Algeria. But Rabat claims the territory belongs to Morocco.

As a consequence of this on-going dispute, Morocco and Algeria have clashed repeatedly, and have cut ties in 2020, even though Algeria does not seek control of the Western Sahara itself.

Over the past years, Morocco has gained more and more support for its claim on the region and this summer, France changed its diplomatic stance, too.

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the coronation of King Mohammed VI, the 61-year-old monarch received a congratulatory letter by French President Emmanuel Macron in which he said that from now on, France will be supporting Morocco’s plan for the Western Sahara.

This plan, which was initially proposed by Rabat in 2007, includes creating autonomous political institutions in the region as



well as pushing economic development including a port at the Atlantic Ocean. However, Morocco will be holding control over foreign affairs, defence and currency.

“France’s recognition is an extremely symbolic move that might seal the fate of the Western Sahara conflict,” Sarah Zaaimi, a researcher and the deputy director for communications at the Washington-based think tank Atlantic Council, told DW.

Thomas M. Hill, director of North Africa Programs at the Washington-based think tank United States Institute of Peace concluded in an op-ed this month

that the Western Sahara conflict “is over” and that the indigenous Sahrawi independence movement is left with no choice but to eventually settle for some form of autonomy within Morocco.

France acts with an eye on migration

France is only the latest state to recognise the Western Sahara region as Moroccan territory. Spain did so in 2022, as did the United States as part of a “quid pro quo” for Rabat’s normalisation of diplomatic ties with Israel in 2020.

The Gulf countries and various African and Latin American coun-

tries regard the Western Sahara as Moroccan, too.

About the same number of countries support the Polisario Front and the quest for independence by the Sahrawis. However, support for this side has been stalling.

The UN neither recognizes the sovereignty claims of Morocco nor those of the Polisario Front. The international body endorses a UN-led referendum for the local Sahrawis instead.

This is also the position of the European Union, despite first Spain’s and now France’s changed stances.

Alice Gower, director of geo-

politics and security at the London-based consulting firm Azure Strategy, highlights that France’s diplomatic turnaround after years of keeping neutral on the topic is less driven by the desire to end the actual dispute over the Western Sahara.

“France’s recognition has little practical effect on the ground,” she told DW.

“Macron’s move has undoubtedly been in part motivated by transactional politics as migration is a fiercely contested issue in France,” she said. The Western Sahara has become one of the most frequented departure points for aspiring migrants and France hopes that Mohammed VI will help curb migration to Europe.

In addition, France also has a high level of interest in avoiding a power vacuum in the increasingly volatile region that includes unstable and warring countries like Libya and Sudan.

“Macron desires to prop up the Moroccan monarchy, which has been suffering a crisis of legitimacy in recent years amid rising Russian and Iranian influence in neighboring Algeria and broader security concerns across the Sahel,” Gower said.

Algeria’s political pressure

However, France’s decision also has the potential to “throw Algeria more in the arms of the Russian Iranian axis, and push Algeria into a counter move, particularly in light of its upcoming presidential

elections in early September,” Atlantic Council’s Zaaimi told DW.

Zine Labidine Ghebouli, a political analyst on Algeria and postgraduate scholar at the University of Glasgow, is therefore worried that “the region may be heading towards the moment when the Polisario Front decides that it is more appropriate and more useful to intensify its military campaign rather than waiting for a diplomatic solution that may not come.”

So far, however, the Sahrawi news agency only reported that the “Polisario Front has asserted that resolving the situation in occupied Western Sahara necessitates the ‘strict and firm implementation’ of international legitimacy resolutions affirming the Sahrawi people’s right to self-determination.”

An autonomous region is also envisioned by the around 173,600 Sahrawi refugees

who have been living in Algerian refugee camps for the past 50 years. According to recent numbers by the UN, they have been bearing the world’s second longest-standing refugee situation.

Meanwhile, Algeria has stepped up its diplomatic pressure. Algier recalled its ambassador to Paris and started to refuse Algerian nationals deported from France.

For Ghebouli, there is no doubt that this is in reaction to France’s Morocco support.

“The Western Sahara has become an extension of Algeria’s national security domain,” he added.

– DW

SPORTS

FIRST TEST

One of my finest knocks so far: Former Bangladesh skipper

RAWALPINDI: Former Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim showcased his resilience by scoring a remarkable 191 runs, forging a record-breaking partnership with Mehidy Hasan, as Bangladesh effectively countered Pakistan's pace attack in the first Test.

After the match, Mushfiqur Rahim said, "This is one of my finest (knocks) so far, because we haven't done that well overseas. All the players prepared well in Pakistan and back home as well," Rahim said.

"Before the Test series, there was a two and a half months gap. All the players and management were there, the other white-ball players were playing in the World Cup. I'm thankful to the coaching staff and management. When I meet all these guys, it's a luxury for him (Shanto) and I try to give my best. Doing well for my country inspires me. I want to make an announcement, want to donate my prize money as there's been flood back in Bangladesh," he added. -ANI

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Electric vehicle models produced by South Korea's Hyundai Motor Co. and Kia Corp. have received top ratings in major global car crash safety tests, according to the companies.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,687.70 points, up by 0.28% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.63% at 444.65 points. Al Omaniya Financial Services, up 9.93%, was the top gainer while Oman Flour Mills, down 3.81%, was the top loser.

Pacts worth OMR22mn signed for investments

The usufruct contracts provide for the establishment of investment projects in agricultural, industrial, medical and commercial sectors

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning today signed 31 usufruct contracts for investment on a total area of 2.3 billion square metres, to the tune of more than OMR22 million.

The contracts provide for the establishment of investment projects in agricultural, industrial, medical and commercial sectors.

Twenty-five of the contracts deal with investment in agricultural and food security sectors at a



value of more than OMR19.5 million. They include a contract to establish headquarter buildings for Oman Agricultural Society in the Wilayat of Thamrait, a logistics centre and service facilities.

Four of the contracts provide for investment in industrial, medical, residential and commercial

sectors to the tune of more than OMR3 million.

The contracts were signed by Eng. Hamad Ali Al Nazwani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing, and representatives of the companies and establishments undertaking the projects. The ceremony

was also attended by representatives of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and the Najd Agricultural Area Development Office.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is making efforts to activate the usufruct programme,

considered an effective means to support the local economy, enhance investment and stimulate economic growth. The initiatives include the generation of employment opportunities for Omanis and the establishment of projects that contribute to self-sufficiency in some vital sectors. -ONA

TRAVEL DEMAND UP

UAE national carriers fly to 606 destinations

ABU DHABI: The UAE's national carriers are expanding their destinations, driven by the country's strong global tourism and business reputation and the resurgence in travel demand. The General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) projects passenger traffic to reach 140 million, reflecting the ongoing growth and competitiveness of UAE airlines.

Official data indicates that UAE national carriers now serve approximately 606 destinations worldwide, including joint and cargo routes, marking a 3.4 percent increase from the 586 destinations served at the end of 2023. The breakdown of destinations by carrier is as follows: Emirates with over 144 destinations, Etihad Airways with 79 destinations, flydubai with 125 destinations, Air Arabia with 218 destinations, and Wizz Air Abu Dhabi with 40 destinations.

Etihad Airways, in particular, has been expanding its route network with the goal of reaching 125 destinations by 2030. The airline aims to leverage its strategic location between Asia and Europe and increase its annual passenger count to 33 million.

Emirates currently operates a network covering 144 passenger and cargo destinations across six continents, continually working to increase seat capacity to meet rising travel demand and provide flexibility and choice for travellers passing through Dubai.

flydubai flies to 125 destinations in 58 countries across Africa, Central Asia, Central and South East Europe, the GCC, the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent and South East Asia, served by a fleet of 88 Boeing 737 aircraft.

Air Arabia Group operates an extensive network with 218 destinations across six strategic hubs, including 113 from the UAE, as well as locations in Morocco, Egypt, and Pakistan. I

Wizz Air Abu Dhabi has a portfolio of 40 destinations and continues to expand its operations. -WAM

US CENTRAL BANK

Fed Chairman signals end of anti-inflation campaign

WASHINGTON: US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell issued his strongest signal yet that the central bank will soon begin cutting interest rates, saying the central bank intends to act to avoid further weakening of the US labour market, according to report.

Fed officials are scheduled to hold their next meeting on Sep 17-18, and are widely expected to cut the benchmark federal funds rate.

The the Wall Street Journal quoted the US central bank chairman in a recent speech at the

bank's annual meeting as saying: "The time has come to adjust the monetary policy pursued by the Federal Reserve," referring to the policy of monetary tightening and raising interest rates. He stressed that they do not seek further decline in conditions in the labour market.

"The continued weakness in labour market conditions is unmistakable, and we will do everything we can to support a strong labor market while making further progress toward price stability," Powell

added.

The newspaper reported that Powell's statements almost mark the end of the Fed's historic campaign to combat inflation, a campaign that Powell reinforced from the same platform two years ago when he indicated his willingness to accept recession as the price of reducing inflation.

It also quoted Mark Sommerlin, managing partner at the economic consulting firm Evenflo Macro, as saying that the Fed chairman's speech could be seen as a clear

shift towards supporting the labor market.

The Federal Reserve kept interest rates steady at its last meeting in late July, although many officials saw a case for cutting them.

Two days after the Fed meeting, the Labour Department announced that the unemployment rate had risen to its highest level in nearly three years, and that although inflation remains above the Fed's 2 percent target, it has been steadily downward in recent months.

According to the newspaper, the most important question that financial markets and central bank officials are asking - and which they themselves do not know the answer to - is the size of the interest rate cuts scheduled for next September.

The Wall Street Journal explained that the main interest rate adopted by the US Federal Reserve currently ranges between 5.25 percent and 5.5 percent, which is widely viewed as an obstacle to economic activity. -ONA



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MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Al Omaniya Financial Services, up 9.93%, was the top gainer while Oman Flour Mills, down 3.81%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,687.70 points, up by 0.28% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.63% at 444.65 points. Al Omaniya Financial Services, up 9.93%, was the top gainer while Oman Flour Mills, down 3.81%, was the top loser. Shares of OQGN were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover. A total number of 490 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO1.89 million, with more than 7.39 million shares changing hands. Out of 52 traded securities, 19 advanced, 8 declined, and 25 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for RO 164K while foreign investors were net sellers for RO 130K, followed by GCC & Arab investors for RO 33K worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 7,588.04 points, up 0.22%. Prices of Al Omaniya Financial Services, Takaful Oman, Arabia Falcon

Insurance, Oman & Emirates Investment, Global Financial Investments were up by 9.93%, 6.52%, 3.31%, 1.37%, 1.35% respectively. Prices of Oman Arab Bank were down by 0.70%. Industrial Index closed at 5,868.72 points, down 0.06%. Prices of Construction Materials, Al Anwar Ceramics, Jazeera Steel Products, Gulf Mushroom Products were up by 4.26%, 2.22%, 1.79%, 0.46% respectively. Prices of Oman Flour Mills, A'Saffa Foods were down by 3.81%, 1.27% respectively. Services Index was up by 0.26% before closing at 1,824.23 points. Prices of Barka Water & Power Company, Majan College, Oman Oil Marketing, Al Suwadi Power, OQ Gas Networks were up by 4.35%, 2.80%, 1.91%, 1.33%, 0.71% respectively. Prices of Al Jazeera Services, SMN Power Holding, Musandam Power, Oman Telecom were down by 1.40%, 0.63%, 0.40%, 0.20% respectively.

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,694.58	4,674.46	4,687.70	4,674.46	13.24	0.28
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,595.50	7,571.59	7,588.04	7,571.59	16.45	0.22
Industry Index	5,891.34	5,859.77	5,868.72	5,872.38	-3.67	-0.06
Services Index	1,828.12	1,819.50	1,824.23	1,819.50	4.74	0.26
MSX Shariah Index	445.75	438.97	444.65	441.84	2.80	0.63
MSX TR INDEX	6,524.73	6,496.76	6,515.16	6,496.76	18.40	0.28
FINANCIAL TRIDX	8,629.27	8,602.11	8,620.80	8,602.11	18.69	0.22
INDUSTRIAL TRIDX	6,797.21	6,760.78	6,771.10	6,775.34	-4.23	-0.06
SERVICES TR IDX	2,127.31	2,117.27	2,122.78	2,117.27	5.51	0.26
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
7,397,057	1,885,153	490	24,446,416,071	19	8	25	52

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, AUGUST 25

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF. RD	DIFF %	LAST PD	LAST BD	LAST OFR	PAV. VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	14,200	2,592	6	0.182	0.184	0.182	0.184	0.180	0.004	2,222	0.184	0.178	0.198	0.100	40,480,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	4,200	1,195	3	0.284	0.285	0.284	0.285	0.280	0.005	1,786	0.285	0.270	0.285	0.100	35,595,919
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	3,400	252	1	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.073	0.001	1,370	0.074	0.071	0.074	0.100	9,018,750
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	105,975	7,861	5	0.074	0.075	0.074	0.075	0.074	0.001	1,351	0.075	0.074	0.080	0.100	15,000,000
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	116,150	8,827	9	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.075	0.001	1,333	0.076	0.075	0.076	0.100	54,994,882
OM0000003399	SHOAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	779,561	104,361	28	0.133	0.134	0.133	0.134	0.133	0.001	0,752	0.134	0.124	0.134	0.100	747,251,000
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	1,426,148	203,383	139	0.141	0.143	0.141	0.142	0.141	0.001	0,709	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.100	614,948,597
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	767,213	198,655	22	0.259	0.259	0.258	0.259	0.258	0.001	0,388	0.259	0.257	0.259	0.100	1,944,156,839
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	109,808	43,926	8	0.400	0.402	0.400	0.400	0.399	0.001	0,251	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.100	94,564,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	125,000	33,750	1	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.000	0,000	0.270	0.260	0.270	0.100	438,005,516
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	1,629	544	1	0.334	0.334	0.334	0.334	0.334	0.000	0,000	0.334	0.320	0.334	0.100	223,234,052
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	200	148	1	0.740	0.740	0.740	0.740	0.740	0.000	0,000	0.740	0.739	0.740	0.100	70,300,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	230	16	1	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.000	0,000	0.073	0.073	0.074	0.100	6,570,000
OM0000003968	QOERDOO	228,975	66,564	11	0.290	0.290	0.288	0.288	0.288	0.000	0,000	0.288	0.288	0.290	0.100	197,471,938
OM0000004735	SEMBORP SALALAH	25,000	2,600	2	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.000	0,000	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.100	95,275,483
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	193,629	14,909	17	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.000	0,000	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.100	13,475,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	22,000	1,628	2	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0,000	0.074	0.074	0.075	0.100	49,941,670
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	223,715	67,111	22	0.300	0.302	0.299	0.300	0.300	0.000	0,000	0.300	0.293	0.300	0.100	231,060,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	197,522	197,215	14	0.998	1.000	0.998	0.998	1.000	-0.002	-0.200	0.998	0.998	1.000	0.100	748,500,000
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	1,000	252	1	0.252	0.252	0.252	0.252	0.253	-0.001	-0.395	0.252	0.228	0.252	0.100	17,738,280
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	6,380	2,480	6	0.395	0.395	0.385	0.388	0.393	-0.005	-1.272	0.388	0.385	0.388	0.100	46,560,000
Total	21	4,352,825	958,272	300												
Parallel Market																
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	100,000	16,186	8	0.155	0.166	0.155	0.166	0.151	0.015	9,934	0.166	0.162	0.165	0.100	52,350,222
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	100	5	1	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.046	0.003	6,522	0.049	0.044	0.049	0.100	12,250,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	85,000	20,796	10	0.244	0.245	0.240	0.240	0.230	0.010	4,348	0.240	0.240	0.250	0.100	38,400,000
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	18,482	850	3	0.046	0.049	0.046	0.049	0.047	0.002	4,255	0.049	0.046	0.049	0.100	3,062,500
OM0000007290	ARABIA FALCON INSURANCE	7,970	966	1	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.121	0.004	3,306	0.125	0.124	0.125	0.100	12,912,708
OM0000001877	MAJAN COLLEGE	5,000	550	2	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.107	0.003	2,894	0.110	0.109	0.110	0.100	9,900,000
OM0000002272	OMAN OIL MARKETING	1,500	1,200	1	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.785	0.015	1,911	0.800	0.785	0.800	0.100	49,020,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	155,707	16,477	16	0.104	0.106	0.104	0.105	0.104	0.001	0,962	0.105	0.105	0.106	0.100	234,880,068
OM0000002287	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	3,590	790	4	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.219	0.001	0,457	0.220	0.220	0.225	0.100	10,068,476
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	806	3,290	5	4.190	4.200	3.900	4.200	4.200	0.000	0,000	4.200	3.780	4.300	0.100	13,860,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	100,000	4,500	5	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.000	0,000	0.045	0.045	0.049	0.100	13,821,585
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	46,140	3,461	5	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.000	0,000	0.075	0.075	0.076	0.100	15,913,500
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	89,536	5,010	12	0.056	0.058	0.055	0.056	0.056	0.000	0,000	0.056	0.054	0.056	0.100	4,760,000
OM0000002812	SAHARA HOSPITALITY	1,357	3,800	1	2.800	2.800	2.800	2.800	2.800	0.000	0,000	2.800	0.000	0.000	0.100	22,183,340
OM0000003265	NATIONAL DETERGENT	1,122	729	2	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.000	0,000	0.650	0.640	0.650	0.100	13,000,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	103,300	13,963	9	0.135	0.136	0.135	0.136	0.136	0.000	0,000	0.136	0.136	0.136	0.100	27,606,157
OM0000005963	PHENIX POWER	22,830	1,318	4	0.057	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.058	0.000	0,000	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.100	84,830,885
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REEF	106,388	12,447	15	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.000	0,000	0.117	0.116	0.117	0.100	59,448,115
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	200,000	63,000	1	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.317	-0.002	-0.631	0.315	0.300	0.315	0.100	62,885,214
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	28,443	4,010	8	0.141	0.141	0.141	0.141	0.142	-0.001	-0.704	0.141	0.141	0.143	0.100	235,388,810
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	38,825	8,295	11	0.215	0.215	0.200	0.212	0.215	-0.003	-1.395	0.212	0.212	0.214	0.100	12,975,306
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	771,883	50,989	22	0.067	0.067	0.066	0.067	0.067	0.001	-1.493	0.066	0.065	0.066	0.100	32,395,201
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	7,487	3,594	3	0.480	0.480	0.480	0.480	0.499	-0.019	-3.808	0.480	0.480	0.480	0.100	75,600,000
Total	23	1,895,466	236,296	149												

MAJOR GLOBAL CRASH SAFETY TESTS

Hyundai Motor, Kia EVs receive top ratings



SEOUL: Electric vehicle models produced by South Korea's Hyundai Motor Co. and Kia Corp. have received



LIFESTYLE

POLARIS DAWN: ANOTHER SMALL STEP TO MARS?

A private venture aims to break a record for the highest orbit and do a spacewalk in the hazardous Van Allen Belts. Scheduled launch: August 26.

POLARIS DAWN CREW

JARED ISAACMAN
Mission Commander

SCOTT POTEET
Mission Pilot

SARAH GILLIS
Mission Specialist

ANNA MENON
Mission Specialist and
Medical Officer

IF IT SUCCEEDS, Polaris Dawn will be the first non-government mission to perform a spacewalk. But not only that — it'll do that about 700 kilometers (435 miles) above Earth. The highest ever.

To compare: the International Space Station (ISS) orbits Earth at about 400 kilometers, where the radiation is less intense.

It will also orbit Earth through regions of a highly-charged belt of radiation. There are two of these

“Van Allen Belts”, an inner and an outer one.

Astronauts tend to avoid the hazardous Van Allen Belts, but they will have to travel through them if humans want to fly to Mars and survive. This privately-funded mission could be a first step toward that goal.

The four astronauts on the Polaris Dawn mission will test new spacesuits, designed by Elon Musk's company, SpaceX, to see how well they protect them against the Van Allen Belt radiation.

SpaceX is also providing the spacecraft — a Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon capsule for the crew — to reach an altitude beyond the current record of 1,373 kilometers, set by NASA's Gemini 11 mission in 1966.

Polaris Dawn, the first of a three-part program, is Isaacman's idea.

Isaacman is a billionaire entrepreneur, who made his money in digital payments and military defense. He previously financed and flew on SpaceX's Inspiration4 mission, the first civilian mission to orbit Earth.

Why are the Van Allen Belts dangerous for humans?

The Van Allen Belts consist of charged particles locked in place by Earth's magnetosphere, which includes its magnetic field.

Earth's magnetosphere traps high-energy radiation particles and protects our planet from solar storms and other threats to daily life from space.

While the outer belt holds high-energy particles from the sun, the inner belt is formed by cosmic rays that interact with Earth's atmosphere.

They were discovered by American physicist James Van Allen in 1958.

The Van Allen Belts range from about 680 kilometers above Earth's surface to what some estimates suggest is about 40,000 kilometers from the surface of the planet. And there's a gap between the first and second belt.

The inner “proton” zone is centered at about 3,000 kilometers from Earth's surface and the outer “electron” zone is centered about 15-20,000 kilometers from Earth's surface.

The Polaris Dawn spacewalk will expose the crew to higher levels of radiation than on the ISS. They hope to collect data on the effects of that radiation as a key scientific experiment.

In 2025, NASA plans to send astronauts beyond the Van Allen Belts to land on the south pole of the moon, and eventually on to Mars. Any data provided by Polaris Dawn will feed into those future missions.

Planned health research on Polaris Dawn

Polaris intends to use data from the mission to create research Biobanks to study the effects of space travel on human biology.

It will investigate the effects of space travel on eyesight and brain structure — a major health risk in space, known as Spaceflight Associated Neuro-ocular Syndrome (SANS).

The team also hopes to contribute to studies into decompression sickness (DCS), another health risk during spaceflight. DCS occurs when nitrogen gas bubbles (or gas emboli) damage human tissue. **—W**

SPORTS

AGAINST SRI LANKA

Jamie Smith expresses pride on scoring maiden Test ton following England’s victory

MANCHESTER : Following his match-winning ton in the win against Sri Lanka, England wicketkeeper-batter Jamie Smith expressed happiness on scoring his maiden Test century and at all the outpouring of love from people who were a part of his journey to the English side.

Smith showed immense composure, versatility and class across both innings as his century in the first innings and a quick cameo in the run-chase proved to be vital in England’s five wicket win over the Lankan Lions in the first Test at Manchester.

“It is a great milestone (on claiming his maiden international ton), having missed out by 5 runs in the previous series, it feels nice. To go over the line and to get us into the lead (in the first innings) is amazing. It is when you come back after a day’s play and check those messages from all the people who have been part of your journey and supported you throughout, it really feels amazing. Very proud moment,” expressed a very proud Smith.

Smith said that he was happy to help England secure a first-inning lead, knowing how difficult it would be to bat in the fourth inning.

“Always a semi-difficult chase,



it was attritional and it was a nice wicket, but they bowled nicely. Root played well and allowed everyone to play around him. Enjoyable team to be part of, to be out there and represent your country is a great honor really,” said Smith.

In four Tests and six innings, Smith has scored 357 runs at an average of over 59, with a century and two fifties. His batting with tailenders and ability to shift gears while batting have garnered him acclaim. -ANI

Bangladesh script history with win over Pakistan

Bangladesh beat Pakistan by 10 wickets in the opening match of the Test series

KARACHI: Bangladesh made history by securing their first-ever Test victory over Pakistan, triumphing by 10 wickets in the opening match of the series.

This landmark win came after 14 encounters with Pakistan, where the Tigers had suffered 12 defeats and managed just one draw.

Following this victory, India and South Africa are now the only teams that Bangladesh has yet to defeat in Test cricket.

This victory also provided Bangladesh with a significant boost in the ICC World Test Championship standings, as they leapfrogged Pakistan and South Africa to the sixth spot, tied on point percentage with Sri Lanka (40%). As a result of the loss, Pakistan slipped



down to eighth place with a 30.56% point percentage.

LATEST WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS

The match may have had a damp start due to a delayed beginning caused by a wet outfield, but by the fifth day, it had transformed into an action-packed thriller.

Despite only 41 overs being possible on the first day, Bangladesh got off to a strong start, claiming four crucial wickets.

Mohammad Rizwan and Saud

Shakeel stepped up for Pakistan on Day 2, each scoring a century to rescue their team. Rizwan was especially resilient, crafting an unbeaten 171 in a marathon innings that left him cramping by the day’s end. With an eye on forcing a result, Pakistan declared their innings at 448/6.

For Bangladesh, Mushfiqur Rahim (191) and Shadnam Ismail (93) were the standout performers, making Pakistan toil in the field for much of Day 4. Both came agonisingly close to significant

milestones but fell just short.

Starting Day 5 at 23/1, Pakistan crumbled, being bowled out for just 146, with only Rizwan offering resistance through a fighting half-century. Bangladesh’s spinners stole the show, with Mehidy Hasan Miraz taking four wickets and Shakib Al Hasan adding three more.

The Tigers needed just 30 runs for a historic win, which they achieved in under seven overs without losing a wicket.

-ICC

FOOTBALL

Lewandowski gives Barca narrow win over Bilbao



MADRID: Robert Lewandowski scored the winning goal as FC Barcelona won 2-1 at home over Athletic Club Bilbao on Saturday night.

The game saw Barcelona transfer target Nico Williams form part of the Athletic team, and he looked a threat, especially in the first half, but his club was unable to give him enough of the ball for him to create real damage to Barca.

Barcelona, who were unable to include new signing Dani Olmo in their squad due to Financial Fair Play reasons, opened the scoring in the 25th minute when Yamal received the ball outside the Athletic area and found space to shoot. His effort was quite centered but went through a crowd of players, where a touch from Inigo Lekue took it into the corner of the net.

The goal gave Barca an important touchdown in confidence boost and Lewandowski was

close to a second goal when he hit the pole from a tight angle.

Athletic levelled from the penalty spot five minutes from half-time when Pau Cubarsi caught Alex Berenguer on the edge of the six-yard box and Oihan Sancet sent Marc-Andre ter Stegen the wrong way.

Lewandowski hit the bar with a second half header, and saw Athletic goalkeeper Alex Padilla deny him with a brilliant save. He finally got his reward in the 74th minute after Padilla parried Pedri’s driven cross.

The game started with a second half goal from Ruben Garcia giving Osasuna a 1-0 win at home to Mallorca, who are now coached by former Osasuna boss Jagoba Arrasate.

Garcia’s goal was a fair reward for the Pamplona-based side, who created the better chances in the game. Take Kubo scored the only goal of a close game in the 80th minute to give Real Sociedad a

1-0 win away to Espanyol, while Getafe and Rayo Vallecano drew 0-0 in a game in which neither team managed a shot on target.

In Saturday’s games, Villarreal won 2-1 away to Sevilla, with Ayoze Perez scoring a 95th minute winner, after Dodi Lukebakio’s goal for Sevilla on the stroke of half-time had cancelled out Arnaut Danjuma’s opener for the visitors.

Celta made it two wins from two games at the start of the season, while inflicting Valencia’s second defeat of the campaign.

Although Diego Lopez’s header put Valencia ahead after 14 minutes, Oscar Mingueza’s volley 10 minutes later leveled the score and Iago Aspas’ low shot five minutes later put Celta in front.

Aspas saw a penalty saved by Valencia goalkeeper, Giorgi Mamardashvili before halftime, but Fran Beltran sealed the 3-1 win with half an hour left to play.

-ANI

MANCHESTER TEST

Smith, Root, Woakes shine as England beat valiant Sri Lanka by five wickets

MANCHESTER: Power packed performances from Joe Root, Chris Woakes and Jamie Smith helped hosts England to successfully tackle a fighting Sri Lankan unit as they defeated the Asian side by five wickets in the first Test at Manchester on Friday.

England take a 1-0 lead in two-match series. SL won the toss and opted to bat first.

Struggling at 113/7, it was knocks from skipper Dhananjaya de Silva (74 in 84 balls, with eight fours) and Milan Rathnayake (72 in 135 balls, with six fours and two sixes) that pushed SL to 236/10. Silva and Rathnayake had a 63 run partnership for the eighth wicket, followed by a fifty-run stand between Rathnayake and Vishwa Fernando (13).

Chris Woakes (3/32) and Shoaib Bashir (3/55) were the top bowlers for England.

Despite a poor start and a tricky score of 67/3, fine performances from middle order batters Joe Root (42 in 57 balls with four boundaries), Harry Brook (56 in 73 balls with four boundaries), centurion Jamie Smith (111 in 148 balls, with eight fours and a six) helped England attain a lead of 122 runs as they were bundled out for 358 runs.

Root and Brook shared a 58-run fourth wicket partnership, while Jamie was involved in half-century stand with Brook, Woakes and Gus Atkinson, with his stand alongside Atkinson (20) being a standout one of worth 66 runs for seventh wicket.

Ashitha Fernando (4/103) and Prabhat Jayasuriya (3/85) delivered fine spells for Sri Lanka.



In their second innings, SL once again found themselves in a troublesome position, with the score reading 95/4.

However, veterans Angelo Matthews (65 in 145 balls, with two fours and a six), Dinesh Chandimal (79 in 119 balls, with seven fours) formed a 78-run partnership to push SL towards a lead. Later, keeping his fine form, Kamindu Mendis slammed his second Test ton in five innings, scoring 113 in 183 balls, with 15 fours and a six. SL put up a total of 326/10, giving them a respectable lead of 204 runs. It was Kamindu’s 117-run partnership for the seventh wicket

with Chandimal that pushed SL beyond the 300-run mark.

Woakes and Matthew Potts (3/47) took fine three wickets each to lead England bowling charts.

In reply, England was in a tight position at 70/3. However, Root’s calm and composed half-century (62* in 128 balls with two fours) and solid contributions from Brook (32 in 68 balls, with three fours) and Smith (39* in 48 balls, with four boundaries and a six) took England to a five wicket win.

Smith took home ‘Player of the Match’ award for his century and fine efforts behind the stumps. -ANI

DREAM START

Man City give lesson to Ipswich, Arsenal take important win in Premier League

LONDON: Manchester City needed just four minutes to wake Ipswich Town up from a dream start and bring them crashing back to reality at the Etihad Stadium on Saturday afternoon.

Ipswich impressed for an hour against Liverpool last weekend and took a seventh minute lead when Sam Szmodics scored with a low shot.

Their time in dreamland lasted the five minutes needed for Erling Haaland to level from the penalty spot, and two minutes later Kevin de Bruyne put City ahead, before turning provider for Haaland to make it 3-1 after 16 minutes.

Pep Guardiola’s side were in complete control against their newly promoted rivals and Ilkay

Gundogan made his return to action in the second half, before Haaland completed his tenth Man City hat-trick two minutes from time.

Elsewhere, second half goals from Leandro Trossard and Thomas Partey gave Arsenal a 2-0 win away to Aston Villa.

The home side saw Ollie Watkins miss a great first half chance to put them ahead, but after the break, substitute Trossard scored from a Bukayo Saka pullback, and Partey assured a big win with a low shot from outside the area.

Brighton made it two wins in two games with a 2-1 win at home to Manchester United, thanks to a first half goal from veteran former United striker Danny Welbeck



after 32 minutes and a late finish from Joao Pedro.

Amad Diallo equalized for Erik ten Hag’s men after the hour and they were unlucky not to go ahead

after Alejandro Garnacho’s close-range finish was ruled out after the ball brushed the offside, Joshua Zirkzee with 20 minutes left.

Joao Pedro’s far post header

five minutes into injury time gave Brighton all three points and Ten Hag will look at his defense, who allowed the Brighton player to steal in completely unmarked to score.

Tottenham cruised to a 4-0 win at home to a desperate Everton, who have now conceded seven goals in their first two games of the season.

Back in favor, Yves Bissouma put Tottenham ahead with a thumping shot and then a rare error from Jordan Pickford gifted a second to Son Heung-Min after 25 minutes.

James Maddison set up Cristian Romero for Spurs’ third in the 71st minute, before Son netted his second of the game.

Second half goals from Tomas

Soucek and Jarrod Bowen saw West Ham bounce back from last weekend’s defeat to Aston Villa with a 2-0 win away to Crystal Palace, who have still to click after their positive end to last season.

Alex Iwobi gave Fulham their first win of the campaign as they beat Leicester City 2-1. Record signing Emile Smith Rowe put Fulham ahead in the 18th minute and although Wout Faes gave Leicester hope with their 38th minute equalizer, Iwobi’s effort was decisive.

Morgan Gibbs-White scored the only goal of the game as Nottingham Forest won 1-0 away to Southampton, with the forward poaching from the edge of the six-yard box as Southampton failed to deal with a corner. -Xinhua

Bank Muscat introduces Khareef Dhofar visitors to banking services

The Bank Muscat booth at the Salalah Eat Festival offers a variety of services such as those provided to micro, small and medium enterprises through Najahi Business banking, encompassing collateral-free loans, opening of current accounts and other credit-related facilities to grow their businesses



MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, is participating in the third edition of the Salalah Eat Festival, which currently takes place in Al Hafa beach market, from August 22 to 31, with participation of a number of small and medium enterprises.

Bank Muscat's teams are also available in the festival to cater to all enquiries related to the bank's products and services such as accounts, loans, credit cards and more. There will also be a dedicated team to cater to enquires specific to small and medium enter-



prises in terms of current account, financing or payment solutions.

The festival's main focus is to strengthen the tourism sector, support small and medium-sized enterprises, and encourage entrepreneurship. It also looks into enrich the visitors' experience with a range of various events and accompanying entertainment offers aimed at various segments of society to enhance the tourist movement in Dhofar governorate.

On the occasion, Taya Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General Manager Interior Regions At Bank Muscat said: "The Bank is keen to take

part of the Salalah Eat festival, which attracts large numbers of visitors during Khareef Dhofar season to enjoy the distinctive atmosphere and spend exceptional times. I would like to extend thanks and appreciation to the organizers of the festival and invite customers to visit the Bank Muscat corner to take advantage of the services it offers and enjoy the accompanying events."

The Bank Muscat booth offers a variety of services such as those provided to micro, small and medium enterprises through Najahi Business banking, encompassing collat-

eral-free loans, opening of current accounts and other credit-related facilities to grow their businesses.

Bank Muscat's Sales Team available at the booth delightedly answers visitors queries and provide immediate services like children, Floosi and Shababi accounts opening, in addition to credit cards enquiries and requests which bears exclusive offers and benefits for customers. The booth displays various payment solutions provided by Bank Muscat featured with speed and security catering to the business owners' requirements.

Customers will get a closer look to

the Tap'N'Go payment service available on various Android devices that are enabled with the Near Field Communication (NFC) feature. The service facilitates transactions of payment collection by eliminating the need of having a physical terminal to accept payments. Bank Muscat is keen to adopt top-notch banking services, enabling customers to complete their transactions safely in no time. The innovative digital solutions are designed to meet customers' needs and fulfil their changing requirements.

The bank's booth witnesses a great turnout of Khareef Dhofar visitors, offering a variety of entertaining activities such as a photo zone, games zone, and VR zone. Visitors to the Bank Muscat's booth will have the opportunity to enter the raffle draw and win valuable prizes.

Bank Muscat attaches great importance to participating in such events, as part of its commitment to introduce customers to the various banking services it provides on the one hand, and to bring these services closer to them on the other hand. Over the past years, Bank Muscat has succeeded in supporting a number of initiatives and events aimed at promoting tourism and supporting national development priorities.

PATRIOTIC SPIRIT

Indian School Al Seeb celebrates 78th Independence Day in style



MUSCAT: Indian School Al Seeb celebrated the 78th Independence Day on 15th August 2024 with great patriotic spirit and fervour. Directors incharge, Nidheesh Kumar P.P and Shameer. P.T.K, SMC President Krishnan Raman and other members of the School Management Committee, parents and students of ISAS witnessed the programme.

The celebrations began with the singing of the Indian National Anthem, filling everyone's hearts with a deep sense of pride and patriotism. To make the occasion memorable, a medley of patriotic songs titled "Unity in Diversity" was performed, paying tribute to India's vibrant cultural heritage. This musical presentation evoked strong emotions and celebrated the spirit of unity and diversity among communities.

Krishnan Raman, President of the School Management Committee, presented excerpts of the address of President of India,

Draupadi Murmu, on the occasion of the Independence Day emphasising, women's empowerment, self-reliance in agriculture, and a forward-looking vision for the country.

A well-crafted musical skit titled "Freedom Comes with Responsibility," performed by students from the middle and senior sections, further enriched the event. The skit highlighted contemporary challenges facing India and underscored the responsibilities of its citizens in addressing these issues.

The audience were enthralled by the captivating dance performance by the school's dance group. The dancers visually depicted the significance of the tricolour in the national flag through a dynamic and emotionally resonant routine. This performance, coupled with a vibrant display showcasing the nation's progress in various fields since gaining independence in 1947, was exhib-

ited serving as a fitting tribute to India's 77 years of freedom and its bright future.

With its continued effort to improve the infrastructure of the School, a newly installed lift and two additional classrooms were inaugurated by Krishnan Raman and the School Directors in Charge Shameer PTK and Nidheesh Kumar PP.

The event stood as a poignant reminder of the hard-won freedom that the nation holds dear, alongside the profound responsibilities that come with being citizens of an independent country. The celebration not only ignited a strong sense of national pride but also enhanced the collective love and respect for India's rich cultural diversity. It served to inspire everyone present to embrace their duties in shaping a future that honours the nation's illustrious heritage, while steadfastly striving for unity, progress, and the overall betterment of the country.

NATIONAL BANK OF OMAN



NBO hosts exciting annual kids carnival to nurture young talent

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) hosted its annual Kids Carnival on 24 August 2024 at its head office in Muscat. A cherished tradition since 2017, the event targeted NBO's employees and their families, underscoring the bank's ongoing commitment to building a sense of community and togetherness within its workforce.

Timed with the start of the new school year, the Carnival offered children an opportunity to engage in numerous activities that prepared them for academic success. The event featured different in-

teractive workshops, cultural activities, and engaging sessions that inspired a love for learning while promoting essential life skills.

The robotics workshops were a primary event, aiming to provide children with a captivating introduction to technology and innovation and financial literacy sessions to nurture responsible financial habits from an early age.

The annual NBO Kids Carnival is more than just a day of fun—it is an initiative formed to support the development of young minds and encourage them to explore their

creativity. This aligns with NBO's mission to nurture the next generation of leaders and innovators by equipping them with the skills and confidence needed for future success.

NBO's annual Kids Carnival continues to play a vital role in the bank's commitment to actively engage with its employees, their families, and the wider community. Through this event, NBO reaffirms its dedication to creating a supportive environment where its employees and their children can grow, learn, and thrive.

ENHANCED DRIVING EXPERIENCE

Navigate the city with 25 MY compact SUV Kia Seltos



MUSCAT: Living the city life comes around with its own set of challenges. The narrow roads, heavy traffic and tricky highways make navigation a tedious task. For those meeting busy schedules and getting life through a hectic routine, it is important to have a dedicated car that meets your expectations.

Indulge in an enhanced driving experience with the Kia Seltos, a compact SUV that is perfect for young drivers & executives looking for a modern ride. It is easy to navigate in winding city spaces or crowded mall parking spots when one is driving at an elevated position of an SUV.

Treat it as an investment or a lifestyle upgrade, Kia Seltos checks all the boxes. Diving deeper- Under the hood, the Seltos features a 1.5L engine producing 113 hp at 6,300 rpm paired to a VVT transmission that delivers exceptional performance and an impressive fuel efficiency of 17 KMC/litre, lessening the burden on your pocket.

At first look, the impressive

2,610mm wheelbase and 17-inch alloy wheels create a firm road grip whereas the interior is spacious, comfortable and aesthetically pleasing that spells luxury. Crafted using a bold design philosophy with sharp muscular creases, in the Seltos, Kia introduced its new design, a diamond pattern radiator grille garnish complemented by the eye-catching daytime running headlights.

A look inside – the five-seater offers the luxurious comfort of roomy legroom, wider headspace, ventilated front-row seats and a panoramic sunroof that brightens the mood. Discover a range of seamless controls for easy cruising with the 3.5-inch mono OLED LCD, smooth controls paired to the steering wheel, 8" display audio with integrated Apple Car Play and Android Auto and a wireless charging tray for compatible smartphones. Customise the interiors with ambient lighting options while you fill-up the 433-litre boot to load your travel essentials.

Create your perfect drive with Seltos' amazing range of features as you cruise highways and lanes.

Kia's attentiveness to life-saving technologies is reflected in its dynamic product lineup. Not missing out on a beat, the Seltos features advanced safety that makes the overall ride a joyful experience. It is equipped with manual speed limit assist (MSLA), electronic parking brake, Parking Distance Warning (PDW), rear-view monitor, front and back sensors.

Moreover, Kia offers state-of-the-art service and spare parts facilitation centres to avoid inconvenience in times of mishaps. Visit your nearest Kia showroom to get a first-hand experience with the Seltos and join the Kia family. The Kia team eagerly anticipates your arrival to support and enhance your Kia ownership experience.

Reliable International Automotive, Kia's distributor in Oman, ensures a rewarding ownership experience with excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities.

ROUND-UP

Alizz Islamic Bank introduces ‘Aziz & Aziza’ series to enhance financial awareness in children

Alizz Islamic Bank continues efforts to raise financial awareness through various initiatives, as it is imperative for today’s children and youth to have a solid understanding of basic financial concepts and skills to navigate their way to achieve a successful and sustainable future



MUSCAT: As part of its efforts to increase financial awareness in children, Alizz Islamic Bank recently launched ‘Aziz & Aziza’ series, a partnership with Oman’s First Children’s Magazine ‘Murshid’ that will have monthly stories written in a fun and educational way that appeal to the youngsters. The series will encourage children to develop skills such as financial planning, setting goals and learn the value of saving and investment. Alizz Islamic Bank continues ef-

forts into raising financial awareness through various initiatives, as it is imperative for today’s children and youth to have a solid understanding of basic financial concepts and skills to navigate their way to achieve a successful and sustainable future. The idea of sharing knowledge in a fun and exciting approach was the key element while developing the series. The aim of the series is to empower children to make sound

financial decisions in line with the country’s goals and objectives. Touching on the launch Asaad Al Kharusi, Chief Operating Officer of Alizz Islamic Bank said “Financial concepts like saving, spending, financing and investing are the building blocks for a strong foundation of financial literacy. Promoting these concepts through a fun medium like the Murshid Magazine and motion graphics comes as part of Alizz Islamic Bank’s efforts to

always cater to the target audience creatively. Under the ‘Alizz Cares’ pillar of education, we believe in focusing on learning, training & development for the children and youth of Oman and equipping them with all the necessary tools for a successful future” Alizz Islamic Bank had previously launched ‘Alizz Jr’; a comprehensive value proposition targeting children under the age of 15 that offers a wide range of attrac-

tive benefits and services designed to meet the unique needs of today’s children, while also promoting a culture of saving. With a focus on securing a brighter future for the children, parents/guardians can conveniently visit any branch of Alizz Islamic Bank in order to avail the program’s benefits. ‘Alizz Jr’ offer parents the opportunity to earn attractive profits on the amount they deposit in a savings plan that can be used for

education/higher studies or for future savings of the child. This will provide parents with flexible options for deposits and standing instructions, allowing them to choose between weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, or annual contributions. This aims to support children’s higher education, enabling them to continue their journey at an affordable finance rate with easy and flexible procedures in future.

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS



Indian School Bousher hosts its annual award ceremony

MUSCAT: Indian School Bousher hosted its Annual Award Ceremony with great enthusiasm, celebrating the outstanding achievements of its students. The event was honoured by the presence of Chief Guest Dr. Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman, Board of Directors for Indian Schools in Oman, and Guest of Honour Ashwini Sawrikar from the Academic Committee of the Board of Directors for Indian Schools in Oman. Sivakumar Manickam and Ashwini Sawrikar inaugurated the “Hall of Fame,” a new initiative created to highlight the international achievements of the school’s young talents. The event commenced with graceful melodies of faith, followed by the welcome address and the prelude of Annual Awards by Prabhakaran P, Principal of Indian School Boush-

er. Sampriti Anand, a student of Grade XI in Indian School Bousher was recognized for becoming the youngest paragliding pilot in Oman. This was followed by the felicitation of awardees across various categories by the Chief Guest, the Guest of Honour and the members of School Management Committee. More than 500 students were recognized for their academic excellence, including CBSE grade 10 and 12 school and subject toppers, marking a significant milestone in their educational journey. In his address, Manickam emphasized that education is a journey characterized by perseverance, determination, and an insatiable thirst for knowledge. He encouraged students to be consistent in their efforts, noting that consistency is the key to unlocking success.

BP OMAN

Children’s Public Library implements a series of workshops in Salalah



MUSCAT: The Children’s Public Library, for the first time implemented a variety of programmes and workshops in the city of Salalah, which comes as part of the Marifah programme in partnership with bp Oman. The workshops were held at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center for Sports and Youth, where the library hosted the Bahraini storyteller and trainer Tufool Ahmed. The workshops included storytelling activities and specialized writing workshops aimed at devel-

oping creative and literary skills among children and youth. T his programme is a valuable addition to the cultural activities in Salalah, contributing to the enhancement of culture and creativity through interactive educational activities. Sara Al-Mamari, the administrative manager of the library, stated: “We are very pleased to expand the Marifah program to reach Salalah for the first time. Through these workshops, we aim to foster a love of reading and creativity among children and youth, and we

look forward to providing a unique and enjoyable educational experience for the participants.” The Marifah programme, which is currently in its sixth edition and was first launched in 2018, aims to spread knowledge and creativity among children. It annually targets more than 1,200 participants from various governorates of the Sultanate and neighboring countries and conducts more than 44 educational workshops. This year the library has completed 36 workshops, benefiting a total of 1,376

children so far. Ibrahim Al Hinai, social investment manager at bp Oman, Kuwait and Qatar, commented: “This partnership contributes to developing the knowledge and skills of children through a series of workshops, courses and events for children, parents and those interested in children’s literature. “We believe that this is a core part of education and aligns with Oman’s Vision 2040 as well as our priorities at bp Oman in developing our local capabilities.”



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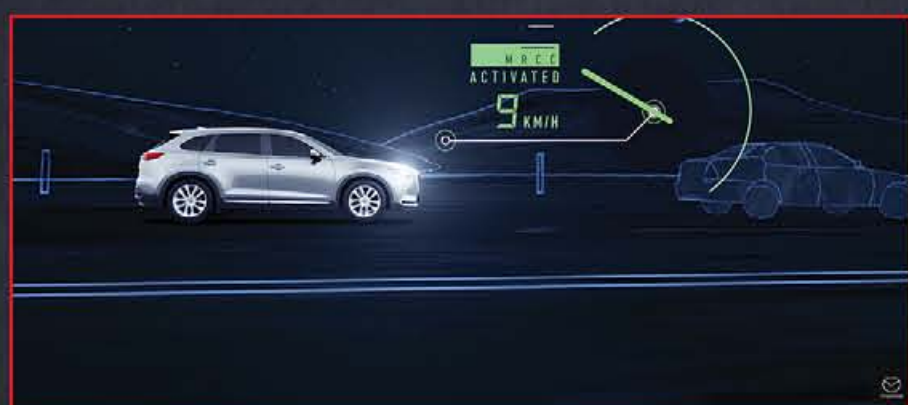
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Indian School Sohar



Indian School Al Seeb

The internet abbreviation ICYMI is useful to update a friend who joined the conversation a bit late. What does it stand for?

What is the name of Oman's traditional manmade irrigation system?

Can you match wits with the participants?



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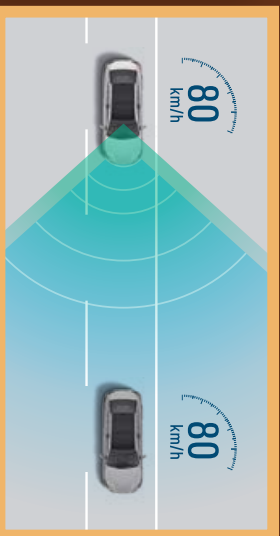
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